

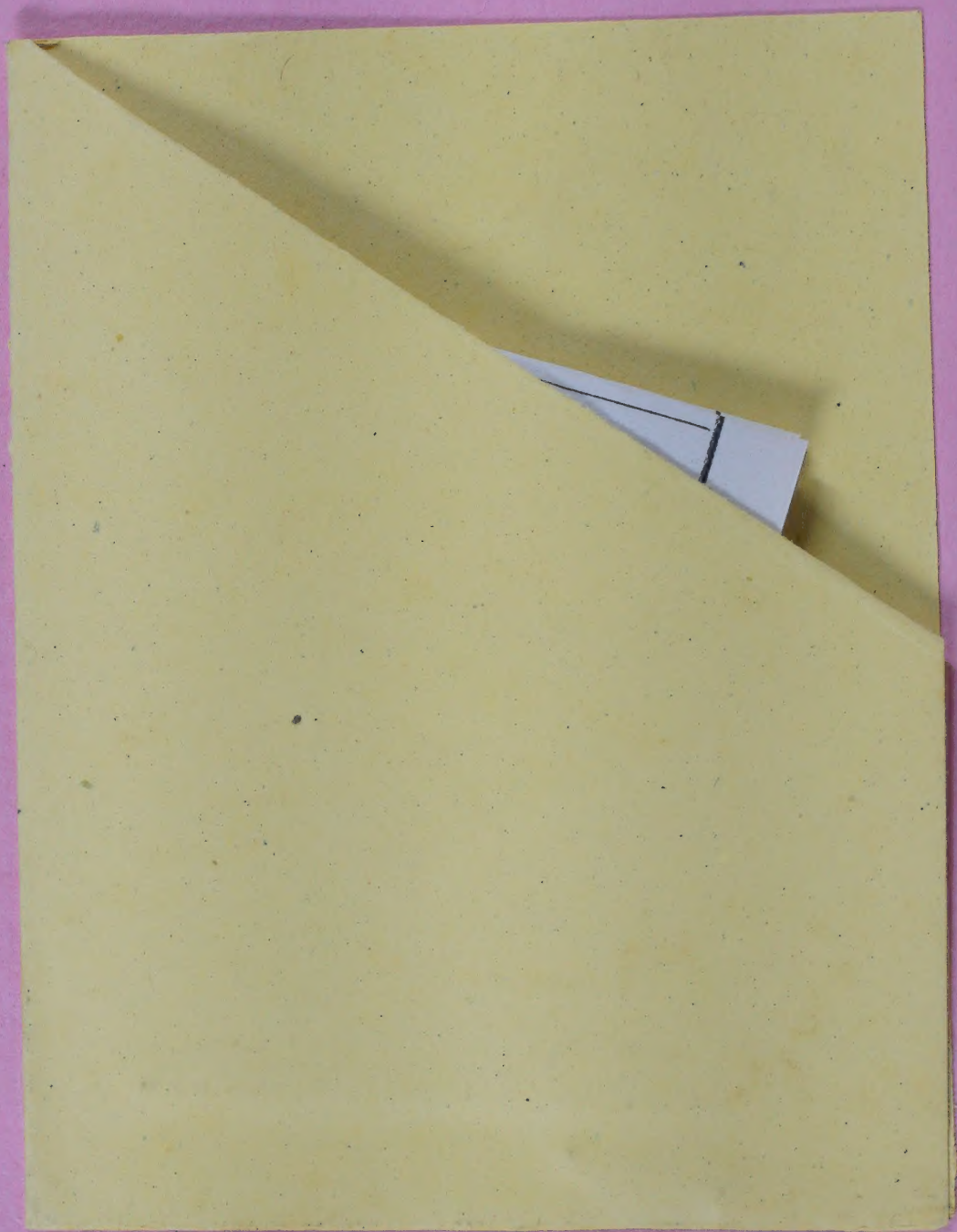
Mission Theology for our Times series no. 12

VISION OF
RELIGIOUS LIFE IN FUTURE AND
THE FUTURE OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

Fr D.S. Amalorpavadass

Published by
National Biblical Catechetical & Liturgical Centre
Bangalore 560005.
India
1980

442



Printed at St Paul Press Training School, Nagasandra,
Bangalore—560073

COMMUNITY HEALTH CELL

Koramangala

Bangalore-560034

India

VISION OF RELIGIOUS LIFE IN FUTURE AND THE FUTURE OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

D.S. Amalorpavadass

(This talk was delivered by the author at the request and on the occasion of two Asian Meetings of Religious: Asian Meeting of Religious (AMOR IV) Bombay, November-December 1977 and the Meeting of the Asian Conferences of Major Superiors, NBCLC, Bangalore, March 1978 presided over by Cardinal Edward Pironio. Subsequently, the author has shown its relevance to other topics such as prayer, ashrams, spiritual quest, social justice, integral human development, etc. This is published here now due to its actuality, with reference to many concerns and themes – Editor).

Introduction

The World of Today, the Asian Continent, the Indian Society poses serious challenges to the Asian/Indian Churches in general and to the religious in particular today and tomorrow. We have to search for a response adequate enough to meet the challenge by a correct reading and interpretation of the signs of the times. This should not be done in a past-oriented attitude with a tradition-bound concern, wanting to move in the safety of beaten paths. One cannot be satisfied either with an involvement in a narrow and fleeting moment of the present. What we need is a vision of the future, or rather a comprehensive vision of history, sharing the very vision of the Lord of history who is yesterday, today and the same forever, to whom belong all the ages, and who is the beginning and the end as well as the middle (Revel. 1:8).

Now the reading of the signs of the times and still more the correct and detached interpretation of them demand that we have a radical understanding of ourselves as religious and a realistic vision of the religious life in future, in the Asia to come and in the India of tomorrow.

The answer to the question, "Who is a religious?" is also the answer to many other concerns: 1. the objective of personality development and human maturity; 2. the ultimate purpose of Christian vocation; 3. the mission of the Church as liberation (salvation) of all men; 4. the objective of our social concern and involvement as the liberation of the poor and the oppressed; 5. the goal of spiritual quest in Hinduism (as moksha or mukti; liberation and release) and in Buddhism (as nirvana, total emptiness and complete detachment); 6. the definition of ashram as a relentless quest for the Absolute; 7. the conditions and content of prayer or what is prayer; 8. and finally who is a religious? What is religious life? What is the reality of vocation to religious life?

There are different ways of understanding and formulating religious life just as there are various models used in the Bible and in official documents of the Church to describe the Church itself. Aware of this and therefore conscious of the limitation of choosing a particular aspect or model, I have been personally impressed by the stimulating and challenging theology of St. Paul who presents Christian life or life in Christ, among others, as a call to freedom.

"My Brothers and Sisters, as you know,
You were called to liberty" (Gal. 5:13)

"When Christ *freed us*, he meant us to remain free,
Stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery"
(5:1)

"If you are *led by the Spirit* no law can touch you,
(5:18)

Since the Spirit is our life, *let us be directed by the Spirit*" (5:25)

There is only one idea, which I am pursuing with a certain logical rigour, in a dynamic sequence and theology-praxis constence, in the very midst of our common search. It is the expression of the resolve to go to the roots (radi-

cality), the necessity to respond to the challenge posed, and the need to communicate it to others meaningfully and convincingly.

To be helpful in this regard I have made a personal reflection asking myself a question: who is a religious? or what does it mean to be a religious? I have struggled to answer it myself in a convincing manner and to share it with all those who question or doubt about the specific identity of the religious. It is this stammering effort to articulate it for myself and others that I am sharing with you in this talk.

I. THE MEANING OF BEING HUMAN, CHRISTIAN, RELIGIOUS

1. **To be human:** To understand man in his totality and to his core we cannot turn to anybody else than Jesus Christ who is not only true God but also true man. We can have recourse to all the human sciences. But another approach is to meet, discover and contemplate Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ we have the revelation of man as well as that of the Father. By his teaching and life, chiefly by his death and resurrection he has given meaning and orientation to human existence and has become the model and pattern of our life as human persons (Phil. 2:5-11): existence for others and in others by total self-emptying and self-giving in love to the point of dying for others (death) and making others exist and of being called into new existence oneself (resurrection) by the OTHER and the others. This ability, both human (nature) and divine (grace) is a process of liberation. It is an act of salvation and a life of total and ultimate belonging to others and to God (community and communion with God and human persons). In short, to be human is to be capable of opening oneself up, emptying oneself and giving oneself totally to the Other and the others (Jn. 15:13).

2. **To be Christian:** When one is really human and fully so one is really Christian. The more human we are, the more Christian we become. To be a Christian means and includes to be fully human. When we grow into it and when this is given to us by God, when we are really so and when this is recognised by others, and when we become aware of it ourselves we are 'Christians'.

To be a Christian implies chiefly

- to be imbued with the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Jn. 20: 19-22; Rom. 8:9f)
- to be convinced of the values of the Gospel and to live them as the core of our life as Christians (Mtt. 5:3-11; 10:24-39)
- to manifest the radicality of the Gospel of Jesus Christ with its power to transform our persons and present life, our society and history.
- and to proclaim it as the good news of the vision of the Kingdom (Mk. 1:14-15; 16:15) by word, deed and life, and
- to offer hope for the future (Jn. 16:33; Rom. 5: 4-11; Eph. 1:18, 2:12; Heb. 6:9-20; Rev. 21:1-6)

The Gospel is thus a gospel of liberation, and the Kingdom is a state where we can be totally free (Lk. 4: 16-21).

It is to be noted that the dimension of transcendence and the supernatural are inseparable from the total vocation of man, from God's plan for mankind and from the total realisation of integral man (Eph. 1:9; I Cor. 3:23; 15:28)

3. To be religious: When one is deeply human and really Christian, when one is endowed with the gift 'to be so' (vocation), when one becomes aware of it and is really so, and when this is recognized by others, one becomes 'religious'. This is the meaning of religious profession. It is not so much we who profess as others (the Church, the community) who recognise that we are deeply human and genuinely Christian or at least have received an explicit call and come to a state of commitment to pursue it relentlessly, whole-heartedly and radically.

4. To be human, to be Christian and to be religious is to be FREE. In this perspective, to be free is not a negative and partial concept but a positive and total one. This is the call to liberty; to be free internally and externally; to join others in their struggle for freedom; to announce the good

news of liberation; and to be totally free with all men by a process of self-sacrifice and self-gift in love to God and others. To be available to all in our belonging to them is the ultimate goal of our life. This is poverty, this is freedom, this is communion!

5. **To be free** in this sense is

to be oneself; total and integral, gathering oneself in unity at the focal point and realising wholeness.

to go to the ends, the frontiers (for universality)

to go to the roots and to the core (for unity)
and thus to be one and universal (for wholeness and integrity).

to be fully related with all persons and with God by an unconditional self-giving and irrevocable belonging,

realised by the living of the paschal mystery with all its exigencies and in all dimensions of life (Rom. 8:14-17)

to have the ability for self-determination and the ability for responding (responsibility)

to the call of oneself (one's own dynamism) to become oneself;

to the call of others (dynamism towards others in the dynamics of the group) to become community;

to the call of God (our vocation and mission in God's plan) to experience bliss/salvation

to have the ability to respond to this triple dynamism.

to be alive like God: God is a God of the living and not of the dead (Mk. 12:27); not to be dead in the loneliness of one's own self, egoism, locked-in-self existence, but to be alive, living for/in others and God (II Cor. 5:13; Col. 3: 10-15).

II. VISION AND UNDERSTANDING OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

A. THE IDEAL PROCESS TOWARDS THIS FREEDOM

(Patterned on the humanity of Jesus)

1. To be free

= Not to be engrossed and bogged down (I Cor. 7:31)

- Not to stop moving
- Not to get settled down and established
- Not to get permanent place here
(We have no lasting city here—Heb. 13:14)
- Not to be repetitious, not to get into a rut, (II Cor. 5:1)
Not to be drifting in routine and monotony
- Not to be enslaved by law, tradition and institution
(Gal. 3:23-25)
- Not to be over-worked and over-whelmed
- Not to be heavily institutionalised and over-structured
- Not to identify with nor to be conformed to any other than God, the only, the ultimate and all-per-vading reality (Rom. 12:1-3)

2. Not to be engrossed

= To transcend

- To part with, to be detached from, to go beyond (Lk. 10:17-22; 25-30, Phil. 3:12-14)
- To lack efficiency and success
- To have no continuity and permanence (the *forte* of the institution)
- To be ascetical and to lead a kenotic existence (Phil. 2:6-7)
- To be obedient to the Father (Heb. 5:7-10)
unto death (Lk. 22: 42), unto the death of the Cross
(Phil. 2:8)

- To move and cease to exist, to be threatened by extinction (Mk. 8:34-36)
- To be unstable and to feel insecure (Heb. 11:18, II Cor. 4:7-12)

3. To be insecure

= To search

- for another security and stability
for another order of efficiency and success
- as a result of one's surrender and entrusting of self into the Father's hand, to be resurrected to a new life and to be given a new name (identity) by the Father's love and fidelity (Phil. 2:9, Acts 3:15)
- To be waiting
- To expect and hope for

4. To expect and hope for

= To look to the future

- not to be possessing and yet possessing: (I Cor. 7:29-31) or possessing and yet not possessing (II Cor. 6:10)

5. To be led by the Spirit

- those who are led by the spirit are Sons of God (Rom. 8:14) and authentic human persons
- in a word, to be in an on-going movement and to be racing for the finish (Phil. 3:12-14)
- under the sole guidance of the Spirit who blows where he wills (Jn. 3:8)

B. ACTUAL CONTINGENT PROCESS TOWARDS FREEDOM

The ideal process described above is the one to be held aloft before the Religious. That is the one to be lived by them and to be embodied in them.

But as a matter of fact, is it so in our lives, as religious,

1. **We start well;** we start well **when we enter into a movement.** This movement culminates in an institution or takes a certain shape. Thereby the movement gets obstructed or the momentum slows down and at times finally stops. For example, when a particular Religious Congregation was founded, it was Charismatic and relevant to the time and the needs of the people. It was appreciated and recognized as a movement (of the Spirit). But what happened later? This movement in order to spread and to last got institutionalised. In that process it either slowed down or came to a halt. What is the way out when we get settled down?
2. **To opt to be once again in movement.** Further, we need to let ourselves once again be led by the Spirit. To do so there is no other alternative than to get out of the institution which bogged us down, which obstructed the movement, which slowed down the momentum, and which made us forget the Spirit or prevented us from following the Spirit.
3. This calls for a **perpetual liberation**, this challenges us to be always in a process. We need to tend and to struggle in order to be free.
4. This cannot be done without **a critique of the institution** of whatever kind it may be; we should make a continual critique of it, and thereby detach ourselves from it again and again.
5. This critique is, in the good sense of the world, **to rebel, to protest and to refuse**
– to rebel against institutions, structures and permanent settlement

- to protest against any compromise or conformity to anything or anybody other than God
- to refuse to be in the rut, to be carried by routine and to be drifting
- to overcome all forms of legalism, ritualism and institutionalism.

6. To do critique is **to be prophetic**

- to be prophetic is to see beyond, to have a vision of the ultimate, to let oneself be absorbed by the vision that beckons us and to move towards it, thereby
- to leave the rest behind; not to be absorbed by the immediate and the passing
- to take all the risks, to leap into the dark, to accept the unknown and the uncertain future unconditionally
- to experience all the pains and sufferings involved in it, as well as to enjoy its newness, the new vistas of the unknown, to await every new unfolding, in view of new discoveries and experiences, in the name of the Gospel and in view of the Kingdom!

7. To be a disturber (in the good sense)

- Yet not to leave or abandon the institution/Church/Congregation but to be in it
- to go deep down into the heart of the Church/the order,
- to constantly shake it and to challenge it, while shaking and challenging oneself as well and first of all.

8. **If we do not do this ourselves**, namely, if we refuse to do a self-critique, if we refuse to challenge and disturb ourselves, if we refuse to address the prophetic word with its double edged sword to ourselves, *God will use other people and forces*—the events of history—to liberate us (which is a grace) especially in the form of confiscation of property, opposition, critique, persecution and oppression. We need not wait for catastrophic events or radical developments to be obliged to do so.

The impulse and inspiration for conversion and renewal—whether in the lives of individuals or groups, religious orders or the Church—comes not only and solely from the Gospel, but from external events and forces. Or rather, it is the happenings in society that make a group return to the gospel and become aware of the evangelical invitation and challenge. A certain Francis of Assisi could be inspired by the reading of the gospel to go on an odyssey, for a life of poverty, but most religious orders and christian communities go to the gospel on the occasion of civil war, loss of property, persecution etc.

We can *voluntarily* and *positively* take the initiative to detach ourselves from it. In this way we can become again a sign of the things to come. In this way we can start moving again.

9. **The example of ashrams** in India can be a model and source of inspiration in this regard. An ashram need not be permanent; hence nobody is worried about its continuation or its successor. The core of an ashram is a guru, a God-realised person under whose guidance a group of persons go in relentless quest of the Absolute. An ashram can rise and fall, appear and disappear, whereas we strive might and main for the continuity of our institution. It can cease to exist, and sometimes it is better that it ceases to exist. After all, everything will cease to exist one day. If so, why not it cease to exist today itself? After all, time is short, and it is running out (I Cor. 7:29).

10. **This is the poverty of Spirit (Plenitude).** This is *obedience* to the Spirit (New existence and resurrection). This is *chastity*, (and not idolatry or prostitution) in total belonging to God and to all in universal communion.

This is the meaning of not getting engrossed with any other reality or person than God.

God alone matters! God suffices!! God is everything, God all in all!!!

This is the core of contemplation!

This is the *beatitude* promised by Christ to all those who renounce everything and follow him unconditionally (Mk. 9: 34-35).

III. RELATION BETWEEN THE RELIGIOUS AND THE OTHERS IN THE CHURCH

What we have described in section II affects deeply and permanently the place of the religious in the church. Consequently the relationship between them and other members of the Church, chiefly the leaders of the Church and the role they have to play in the Church and in society are understood and determined by it.

1. The attitude, process and manner of being and living as religious will necessarily cause *tension*. It is a tension between institution and movement. It is a tension between those who are *primarily*:

for stability, tradition and continuity,

for holding together all and marching together, and those who give *priority*

to prophecy

to the Spirit who is moving

to fixing one's gaze on the goal and responding to the distant beckoning

to move forward and head for the finish

to pioneer, to scout and to go ahead of others,

for the sake of others and in communion with them.

The pioneers and scouts are not those who go away from the group out of selfishness or whim but for the sake of the community. Hence they should be recognised as such and should not be marginalized as not belonging to the community. Sometimes one who walks ahead can be more faithful and loyal than the one who lags behind or walks along.

2. **This tension is institutionalised** between the set-up of the diocese/parish/other institutions and the Religious Orders and Communities.

Bishops and priests, superiors and those in authority, governments and temporal agents *primarily and normally* will care for law and order, stability and safety, unity and peace,

certainty and clarity. They would want to hold the various groups together and to move abreast on an even pace.

The Religious must *primarily and normally* embody, in a pre-eminent way the Spirit who blows while he wills, who, we do not know from where he comes and where he goes, and who goes ahead and pioneers, without losing contact or diminishing fellowship with others.

3 **Should this tension** be considered as an evil and hence **be avoided** or relaxed? In removing this tension will we be still Christians and be a Church? If tension is inevitable and indispensable and therefore if it should stay with us, as it is creative and condition of life, then we must ask ourselves how we can live this tension, especially in instances of multiple loyalties and still move forward in the midst of conflicting loyalties.

How to belong to the Church, to the local church in particular and to be loyal to the authorities. And yet to dissociate and detach oneself from them at times, in order to be loyal to the Spirit and to the future and therefore to be faithful to the gospel values, to be loyal to the cause of the Kingdom and to witness to it here and now?

4. Hence I feel that even with the best of bishops and the best of our Religious Superiors the **tensions will persist**. It is a part of our asceticism and spiritual life to handle these tensions carefully and to convert them into creative and dynamic factors for growth, in complementarity and in view of realising the common cause. On the one hand any kind of polarisation with conflict and division may have to be normally avoided. On the other hand, a simple conformity to the law and institution and subordination to anything other than the spirit will be to enslave oneself again and to slow down the movement towards freedom. It will amount to an abandonment of one's prophetic mission in the name of false unity and peace. Christ does not want *any* unity at all cost. The unity he wants to bring about is one according to his Spirit and on the common basis of gospel values and orientation to the Kingdom:

"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth: it is not peace I have come to bring, but a sword. For I have

come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man's enemies will be those of his own household. Anyone who prefers father or mother to me is not worthy of me. Anyone who prefers son or daughter to me is not worthy of me." (Mtt. 10: 34-37)

5. The Church is a model in this regard as she herself is taken up in an **eschatological tension**, situated as she is—in her existence and mission—between the Pasch on the one hand and Parousia on the other. She needs to be in this world and yet to live a life of heaven, (Col. 3: 1-3) to proclaim the one who has come and yet to wait for him who has still to come (Rev. 1: 8, 22: 17-22), to have already died once-and-for-all and yet to die continuously (Rom. 6), to affirm salvation and resurrection, peace and unity as realities already experienced and yet to work out one's salvation in fear and trembling overcoming conflicts and divisions, to announce a decisive turning point in history and yet to be in a state of expectation, to pray turning to the east 'The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia' and yet to turn to the west and pray 'Come Lord Jesus'.

6. **To live this tension both psychologically and spiritually** we should accept and recognise both, we should be open to each other and share with each other. We need to work together, each according to his charism for the common cause of society and the church.

The maturity of relationship is a relationship between adults. This is also the meaning of the saying that the Church is a Community, a community of persons, a fellowship of love in service to others according to the needs of others and according to one's own charisms, in a dialectical and dynamic inter-relationship, while tending towards a common goal.

7. **The same tension should be maintained** between prayer and work, between quest for God (moksha and the Ultimate) and the quest for justice, between seeking the kingdom of God and engaging oneself in the tasks of the temporal order, between immanence and transcendence, between the universal and the unique. In short, our life is one of multiple tensions. It is through tensions that we realise totality and wholeness and are held together in existence and movement.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CELL

326, V Main, I Block

Koramangala

Bangalore-560034

IV. RELIGIOUS LIFE IN FUTURE AND THE FUTURE OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

When we speak of the future we do not pretend to have a certain and clear idea of the things to come. For a believer or a Christian, God is the future. In the light of our experience in faith at present and on the basis of our faith-tradition in the past, we could project this experience in hope both in the dynamics of our faith and in the dynamics of the present happenings. The Lord in whom we have believed and to whom we have entrusted ourselves and everything, (II Tim. 1:12) the Lord yesterday and today is the same for ever. He is our future in general. He is also the future of the Religious and religious life. In him alone we can see the type of religious life that will evolve in future. Even then what we share in this reflection is not a prediction and foresight but a forecast and presentiment!

In this vision of faith and in this understanding of future the present trends in religious life could be pointers to the shape of things to come.

A. Some Trends and Aspects of Religious Life in Future

This said, let me indicate a few trends of religious life without being exhaustive. These trends are discernible in our present religious life. These trends could continue and even intensify or stabilise in the future.

1. A tension between solidarity and belonging on the one hand and a detachment and movement on the other will strongly mark religious life. This is in view of incarnation and insertion in all realities of life, and of deeper identification and involvement with our fellowmen. This will necessarily result in an ever wider diaspora of the Religious. That is to say, the religious will be more scattered among other Christians and other fellowmen. They will be more scattered as religious but they will be together with other people as human persons and christians; just as all Christians can be scattered as Christians, among people of other religions or no religions and yet be together with them as human persons.

2. This tension between one's belonging to one's fellow-religious and one's belonging to other Christians and to fellow human persons far from being harmful will bring

out the specificity of the Religious. It is in their oneness with others that their uniqueness as religious will become evident. It is in their commonness with all men, Christians and others that the specificity of the Religious will shine out.

3. This double belonging and the tension between them will express itself in the emergence of new forms of community among the religious within scattered situations. Such a creative newness is a necessary consequence of one's distance and separation from other members of one's religious order and one's closeness and living together with other people. As a matter of fact, we have already new forms of community life today, spontaneously springing up under the sheer force of circumstances.

4. The past tradition and the present pattern of a community under the same roof the whole day or the whole week will become less common. All the same, traditional forms of community will continue to exist, but in a lesser degree while the process of developing new forms will intensify and grow.

5. This may facilitate a breakaway from Christian ghetto, clerical clan, religious communalism and casteism, and ecclesiastical institutionalism.

6. This may also enable religious to renounce and to lose institutional and financial security. There may be then greater scope for poverty and sharing. A simpler life-style in small groups may evolve and become possible and common. The religious will acquire a better knowledge of reality; this will be more concrete, direct and lived. Or they will need such a knowledge for the new style of life. Having few institutions of our own, will, to a large extent, enable them to be poor. Some examples are: living in a flat in towns, or in an ordinary house in villages, budgeting and spending within limited income, etc.

7. Most of the members may be working and earning their livelihood. Each one may be working in different fields. They may be employed more and more in institutions managed by the State or by other agencies. Sometimes they may experience like others unemployment and under-employment. This may bring them to the point of lacking some basic needs.

8. A greater mobility may mark the life and activity of the Religious. More and more, we may leave to other people what we have started and move on, in Pauline style.

9. When the religious live scattered thus, there may be less frequency of meeting among themselves. Instead the members will need to develop dynamic relationships which will be highly overwhelming and strongly compelling from within. An ever-growing need and tension may be felt to be together. One will then go in for the quality of relationship, intensity of love, intimacy of experience and a more binding force among them from within. A feeling of need for others will grow, and this will be felt at a deeper level.

10. On the other hand, in the situation of diaspora new and multiple relationships will be made. An ever increasing gamut of them will be fostered. It will imply an equally genuine belonging to all people and yet a uniqueness of relationship among the religious. In that situation will one come to a state of belonging to two primary groups?

11. In spite of it the religious will shine out as such. There may be the least external identity with the minimum of signs as religious. But a newer identity will emerge, in the course of it: to be just common like everybody else, and yet in so doing and being, to shine out as unique. As we know, e.g. only great persons can afford to be simple; only persons with definite identity can really become one with others for they will have no fear or danger of losing their identity.

12. Two models of religious communities will emerge, among other possibilities; one will correspond to the concept and reality of Basic Communities and the other will be modelled on Secular Institutes.

13. There will be need for a new type of Superiors—both major superiors and local superiors. These will be more mobile and distant. There may be less need for local superiors as such, since a community under the same roof the whole day will become less common.

14. Such a type of religious life calls for growth in maturity. One needs to have adequate motivation, sound judgement and greater sense of responsibility.

15. This should be inspired, nourished and sustained by a life of continuous discernment and prayer, led by the Spirit in the community.

These are some of the possible traits, trends and expressions of religious life in future.

One need not be alarmed or afraid that such an evolution can be harmful to religious life. From the above reflection it is clear that nothing essential to religious life is lost or disparaged. On the contrary, there is every chance in this evolution that the overwhelming uniqueness of religious will shine out all the more. Thus the sign-value of religious will become more significant and authentic.

B. Future of Religious Life

Our concern here is not only about religious life in future but also about the future of religious life. The above description of it and its evaluation is already a guarantee that it will endure and survive, and it may even thrive and blossom into something hitherto unknown and unexplored and hence more marvellous! We do not know what God has in store for those who seek him relentlessly and with a singular mind. New vistas and new discoveries await us.

1. However we should not think of the future merely in terms of continuity. Along with continuity there will also be lines of discontinuity, in keeping with the very nature of a movement and pilgrimage.

2. Probably the number of religious may diminish and it has already diminished during the last two decades in Europe and America (though it has increased steadily in countries like India, without any guarantee that this upward trend will continue).

3. Taking even the worst as the inevitable (though the diminution of number need not be considered as the worst eventuality) one can presume that quality, authenticity and specificity may increase. In the last analysis what matters is not number but quality. It is to live the absolute sovereignty of God and the unambiguous transparency of our consecra-

tion to him and the consequent sign of dedicated service to fellowmen. It is better to have a lesser number of religious but more truly religious than a larger number of religious whose authenticity and specificity are doubtful. It is our hope that quality might compensate for the number in future!

4. From another angle, one could equally wonder whether the radical living of the gospel which is religious life, is real and possible in each individual of these large numbers. What the world and the Church need today is not a large number of vague life, ambiguous persons but a few outstanding persons who embody the values of the gospel and live its radicality and absolute exigencies not only in the present state but also in its ultimate and final state of the Kingdom.

5. Such people will be really martyrs or witnesses to Jesus Christ and the final reality! Thereby we shall go back to the origins of religious life which is one of the spring boards to jump into the future! At the end of the period of persecution and martyrdom with shedding of blood, a new form of radical witness came into existence to substitute for martyrdom with blood. That is the monastic life and subsequently religious life!

6. However, Religious life is not one of the constitutive elements that make the Church a Church but the Church needs concrete example and testimony of total commitment to Christ, of irreversible movement towards freedom, and relentless seeking of God and God alone! In order to be effective and striking there is need for the deepest and radical expressions of such seeking and commitment.

It is precisely this need that is met by the sign of monastic life, contemplative life and religious life in general.

Hence it is our firm hope that not only the future of religious life is not in danger, not only religious life will not totally disintegrate and disappear but also it will continue as an essential aspect of christian life and the Church and hence like the Church it will be ever old and ever new!

V. A FEW HINTS ON THE NEW TYPE OF FORMATION REQUIRED FOR RELIGIOUS LIFE IN FUTURE

What we have reflected above and identified as vision and trends of the future, affects the formation of the religious. The type of religious life that is emerging as it is moving into the future challenges some aspects of the present formation and calls for a new type of formation for religious life.

As a part of this general reflection we cannot develop this point fully; at the most we can just indicate a few lines or give a few hints. The educative process and the training method will, among others imply the following:

1. The postulants and novices are not to be kept any more in hot-houses. Their training should be give to them in the field of work as plunged into reality. In such a situation, they will be formed in group but in their relation and living with other groups of persons.
2. It will also be in the process of working for a cause and while carrying out a project. They will be formed while working or doing a profession.
3. Formation should be considered as a continuous search, with inner deeper and personal discovery, and with growing personal convictions, in an atmosphere of freedom with education to freedom.
4. This day-to-day life during formation should be lived in dialogue of life with people of other religions, ideologies and cultures. This is more than sporadic, academic, artificial dialogue with a few intellectuals in the urban area.
5. More late vocations with experience of life can be expected in future. Probably they may come from among those with whom the religious would have worked in diaspore.
6. The formation will initiate them to live in communities of small groups. This will develop dynamic interpersonal relationships and facilitate an ambient of genuine love. This will call for an education to love.

7. A high degree of sound judgement and sufficient motivation will become necessary.
8. A sense of belonging without regular gathering and without heavy institutional and legal controls should be inculcated.
9. The candidates should be enabled to develop an asceticism of distance and proximity, absence and presence, transcendence and immanence, withdrawal and involvement, solitude and togetherness.
10. The formators should help candidates acquire inner freedom, to tap from within unknown resources and make clear and radical options in order to struggle with others for liberation, (personal and structural).
11. Pluriformity and variety will become ever more a necessity and reality, calling for a deeper level unity.
12. Multiple loyalties will have to be inter-related with priorities in total availability. The resulting life of tension will be creative and give new energy and hope.
13. The specificity of Christian existence of religious life in general and of the particular religious order and its charism should be made evident to the candidates.
14. The training for prayer life will have to be not only assured but also continuously deepened and intensified.
15. In short an atmosphere and life-style of an ashram (combining prayer and service) will be usefully integrated into the formation effort.

Conclusion

In the light of the above reflection, the image of the religious is for me that of those who are free and tending towards freedom. They are for me the embodiment of a movement and of refusal to settle down in an institution of any sort. Their function is prophetic; to do a critique of the Church and society and to challenge them relentlessly at all cost, by the challenging life that they lead themselves. Thus they are for all a sign of the things to come, of the beyond and the ultimate towards which all tend. Thus they are and should be a sign of hope, a sign of the Kingdom!

VISION AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE FUTURE OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

by Fr. D. S. Amalorpavadas

PAST

PRESENT

No Polarisation & Conflict
But Dialectical (& Eschatological) Tension

TIME IS GROWING SHORT

The world (everything) is passing away.

INVOLVEMENT (without getting bogged down)
COMMITMENT (engrossed in)
(coarsened by)
IMMANENCE (enslaved by)
INCARNATION

SIGN VALUE

CHURCH
SACRAMENTS
MINISTRY
PAPACY, EPISCOPACY
PRESBYTERATE
STRUCTURES
INSTITUTIONS
PROPERTY, POSSESSION
TEMPORAL DEALINGS/TASKS/
TRANSACTIONS
MOURNING and LAUGHING
SEX (Male & Female)
MARRIAGE, FAMILY
SIGNS OF LOVE

Death

LIBERATION (not angelism and
DETACHMENT disincarnation)
TRANSCENDENCE
IN-BUILT ASCETICISM

Individually

WORLD
HISTORY
LIFE

Process of being
living signs of
interpersonal relationship
and realising self-donation.

RELIGIOUS LIFE
CELIBACY/POVERTY/OBEDIENCE
announcing through it the passing
character of earthly reality
and creating yearning for the Kingdom
to come

THE CALL TO FREEDOM
The Movement towards freedom

To be human → To be Christian → To be religious — TO BE FREE

FINAL SELF DONATION :
TOWARDS ULTIMATE REALITY

End of the world
PAROUSIA

Altogether

FULL SELF - DONATION

TO BE WHOLE
TO BELONG TO THE LORD
TO DEVOTE ONESELF ENTIRELY TO HIM
By a total, irrevocable &
unreserved self-donation, and thus
to be with God - TO BE FREE
in the kingdom, in the Paradise,
in the blissful state of joy and Peace.
men & women do not marry
it matters little married or celibate
they are all like angels. God is not
the God of the dead
but the God of
the living.

NBCLC, P. Bag 577,
BANGALORE - 560 005.

FUTURE

MISSION THEOLOGY FOR OUR TIMES Series

by Fr. D.S. Amalorpavadass

| | Rs. p. |
|---|--------|
| 1. Purpose and Motivation of Missionary Activity | 1.50 |
| 2. Theology of Development | 1.50 |
| 3. Approaches in our Apostolate among followers of other religions | 3.00 |
| 4. Theology of Evangelization in the Indian Context | 2.50 |
| 5. Theology of Catechesis | 3.00 |
| 6. Towards Indigenisation in the Liturgy | 9.00 |
| 7. Main Problems in Preaching the Gospel Today | 2.00 |
| 8. Approach, Meaning and Horizon of Evangelization | 6.00 |
| 9. Evangelization of the Modern World(Documents of the Synod of Bishops, Rome, 1974) | 9.00 |
| 10. Adult Catechumenate and Church Renewal | 9.00 |
| 11. Gospel and Culture (Evangelization and inculturation) | 4.00 |
| 12. Vision of Religious Life in Future and the Future of Religious Life | 2.50 |
| 18. L'Inde a la rencontre du Seigneur Edition Spes, Paris, 1964, 368 pages (out of stock) | 25.00 |
| 19. Destinee de L'Eglise dans L'Inde d'aujourd'hui Fayard-Mame, Paris, 348 pages (out of stock) | 40.00 |
| 20. <i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i> , Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI, December, 1975 | 4.50 |